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THE MARUTS

By

UMA CHAKRAVARTY

The *Ṛgveda* dedicates thirty-five hymns to the Maruts.[1] Besides these thirty-five hymns they are also invoked along with Agni, Indra, Viṣṇu and Nirṛti in a few stray verses and are also invoked along with many other deities in the hymns to the Viśve Devāḥ. The two major aspects of the Ṛgvedic Maruts' character are, firstly, they are storm-gods and then they are Indra's associates and friends, so warriors.

Etymology of the word 'marut'

Nothing has yet been decisively said on the etymology of the word *marut*.[2] The majority of scholars think that *marut* has been formed from *mṛ* "to shine", whereas others think it is from *mṛ* "to die". According to Yāska[3] *marut* comes either from *mi* + *ruc* "to shine" or from *mahad* + *dru*, "to run fast". To him the Maruts were atmospheric storm-gods. Otto Böhtlingk and Rudolf Roth prefer to interpret *mṛ* in the word *marut* as "to shine" rather than as "to die", keeping in mind the brilliant description of this group of gods as portrayed in the *ṚV*.[4] Hopkins also indicates that *marut* has been formed from *mṛ* "to shine" when he says, "their name means the shining ones".[5] Monier Williams interprets *marut* from *mṛ* "to shine" and in that connection refers to the word *marīci*.[6] According to Macdonell[7] and

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1 The Marut-hymns of the *ṚV* : I. 37-39 ; 64 ; 85-88 : 165 ; 167 ; 168 ; 171-172 ; II. 34 ; V. 52-61 ; VI. 66 ; VII. 56-59 ; VIII. 7 ; 20 ; 94 ; X. 73 (?) 77 ; 78.

2 Cf. Mayrhoffer, Manfred : (1963) *Kurzgefasstes Etymologisches Wörterbuch des Altindischen*, Heidelberg, p. 598.
'Eine überzeugende Deutung dieses wichtigen Götternamens steht noch aus'.

3 See *Nighaṇṭu and Nirukta*, ed. Lakshman Sarup, 2nd print 1967, XI. 3, p. 193 (text), (1st print 1926).

4 *Sanskrit Wörterbuch*, Vol. 5 (1868), St. Petersberg, p. 569.
"Die Ableitung neurer von *mar* sterben ist unvereinbar mit dem Bilde welches der Veda den Marut gibt".

5 Hopkins, E. W. : (1885) *The Religions of India* (Reprint 1970), Munshiram Manoharlal, New Delhi, p. 97.

6 Williams, Monier : (1988) *Sanskrit-English Distionary*, (Reprint 1986) Marwah Publications, New Delhi, p. 790.

7 Macdonell, A. A. : (1899), *The Vedic Mythology*, Strassburg, p. 81.
"The root appears to be *mar* but whether in the sense 'to die' or 'shine' it is hard to decide. The latter meaning, however, seems to accord best with the description given of the Maruts in the *ṚV*'.

Keith,[8] who identify the Maruts with storm-gods, *mṛ* in *marut* means 'to shine'. According to Hillebrandt, Benfey, A. Kuhn, Von Schroeder, R. N. Dandekar and Sukumari Bhattacharji the Maruts were the "souls of the dead" and *marut* has been formed from *mṛ* "to die".[9] Inspite of the fact that in places the Ṛgvedic Maruts have been portrayed fearful, destructive, because of their being storm-gods, the over-all picture of these gods in the *ṚV* is very bright and brilliant and this prompts us to hold that *mṛ* in *marut* means "to shine".

Storm- Rain-gods

The Maruts are born of the bright lightning (I. 23. 12).[10] The Rudriyas shower rains even in windless deserts (I. 38. 7). As the mother cow making sound nourishes its calf so the lightning nourishes the Maruts while they shower rains (I. 38. 8). They darken the day with clouds which are laden with water and drench the earth with showers of rains (I. 38. 9). They, on their onward march, make the stable unstable and the heavy, light (I. 39. 3). They do harm to the harmful, shake and saturate the earth with water which they collect from heaven (I. 64. 5). Like wild elephants they devastate forests (I. 64. 7). They roar like lions (I. 64. 8). The irresistible Maruts shake the mountains, uproot trees and separate the branches from them (I. 39. 5; 85. 4). They yoke Pṛṣatīs (their animals) in their chariot and as soon as the tawny coloured animals draw them in their chariot the whole earth and mankind are frightened (I. 85. 4). Hearing the howling of the Maruts the earthly houses with their residents shake (I. 38. 10). The following verse gives a vivid description of the youthful, invincible Maruts :

yúvāno rudrā́ ajárā abhoghā́no
vavakṣúr ádhrigavaḥ párvatā iva |
dṛḍhā́ cid víśvā bhuvanāni pā́rthivā
prá cyāvayanti divyā́ni majmā́nā // I. 64. 3.

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8 Keith, A. B. : *The Mythology of All Races*, Vol. VI, Boston, pp. 39-40.
"There can be little doubt that the Maruts are the storm-gods,— wind in the qualified sense".

9 "A. Kuhn, Benfey held the Maruts to be personifications of the souls of the dead and with this view Meyer and Von Schroeder substantially agree".— quoted from Macdonell's book (*op. cit.* p. 81).
Bhattacharji, Sukumari ; (1968) "Rudra, the Rudras and the Maruts", *Anvīkṣā* Vol. III, Part I, p. 52.
"The derivation of the word Marut is not clear but it appears to have been formed from verb *mṛ* = to die (a parallel Greek verb *maraino* = to die) of which Mārtaṇḍa is a cognate".

10 All references are from the *ṚV*.

"The youthful, ferocious, ever-fresh (Maruts), destroyers of their non-worshippers, intent on fulfilling the prayer of their devotees, with the steadiness of a mountain shake with their strength the whole of existence — heavenly and earthly."[11] They are invoked to come in their bright, all-pervasive chariot, decorated with lightning and armed with weapons. One sees "in the all-pervasive chariot of the Maruts" nothing but the clouds full of water and twinkling with lightning. The showers, as bright as honey, are welcomed by the people (I. 87. 2 also I. 85. 2; V. 54. 2).[12] As the fire is uncontrollable so also is the sound of the Maruts (I. 143. 5). As they pervade the atmospheric regions, as their horses run as if being self-drawn, then indeed the universe with its buildings etc. is frightened; wonderful indeed is their march! As they move on resounding the mountains with their howlings and shaking the surface of heaven, the big trees are threatened and the creepers move from one place to the other (1. 166. 4; 5). The strong Maruts, as bright as fire and as fearful as the beasts of prey, pervade the regions with torrential rains and send the clouds helter-skelter (II. 34. 1). They make the clean water of river Paruṣṇī unclean and shatter the clouds (*adri*) with the felly of their chariot (V. 52. 9; also see V. 53. 6; 7). The waters showered by the Maruts possess medicinal value, so, quite naturally, the devotees desire their company (V. 53. 14). All devastations caused by the Maruts are only apparently ominous; actually they are blessings to their worshippers (V. 57. 3). They wash away the islands that are formed on the river-surface during the dry season (VIII. 20. 4). During their fearful march the waters flow, the earth shakes but she does not become slim (X. 77. 4).[13]

Warrior-gods

The verses depicting the Maruts as warrior-gods bear a totally different note from the verses portraying them as nature gods. They seem to represent two sides of the same coin. They are invoked to kill Vṛtra along with Indra.[14] The bright Maruts are born along with their weapons, with their Pṛṣatī animals; their shouts signal the death of their enemies. With whips in their hands as they proceed making horrifying sound then they adorn their path as it were (I. 37. 2; 3). Their steady weapons never fail them in the battle-fields (I. 39. 2). The leaders whose joy lies in the drink of *soma*, carry immensely strong weapons in their hands (I. 64. 10). All the warriors

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11 Tr. by author.

12 We prerume, such descriptions indicate that the Aryans started by depending on rain waters for their agriculture.

13 The following Ṛgvedic verses may also be taken into consideration: I. 85. 4; V. 54. 2; VIII. 7. 4; 28; 20. 1.

are frightened as these bright warriors resembling powerful kings, are engaged in frightful battles (I. 85. 8). They are implored to protect their devotees from deceitful enemies (II. 34. 9). While fighting against the enemies they at the same time create more powerful weapons as it were (V. 52. 6).[15] Guarded by shoulder-bands and yoking the spotted antelopes (horses?) as they march forward, they win all battles (V. 55. 6). The verse under V. 57. 2 gives a complete picture of the Maruts as fighters — the sons of Pṛśni carrying all kinds of weapons set on their auspicious march in chariots drawn by strong horses.[16] Through the Maruts' help alone powerful warriors defeat their enemies in the battle-field (VII. 56. 23). No other warrior ever looked so bright as do the Maruts in their armour and weapons (VII. 57. 3). The worshippers of the Maruts are never harmed in the battle-field (VII. 59. 4). They are ferocious, showerers (of fulfilment of desires) and strong-armed; they are not scared of their personal security. Their beautiful chariot is furnished with steady weapons like bows etc. Their victory in the fore-front of the battle-field is always guaranteed (VIII. 20. 12).

Anthropomorphic features

The Maruts adorn their body with bright golden ornaments. The golden necklaces dangling on their chests endow them with a very bright look. They put on golden bracelets on their arms and anklets on their ankles. Dazzling golden headdresses embellish their heads. As a woman decorates her limbs with beautiful ornaments so do the Maruts. They wear a very bright look as they proceed on their equally bright cahriots. They carry weapons on their beautifully ornamented shoulders and arms. They also carry a whip in their hands. When they make very loud sound with their whips the listener, though actually hearing it from a long distance, feels that it has been made on the selfsame spot. The mother-cow (Pṛśni) dresses up her calves and makes them look very attractive. The blissful sons of Rudra set out on their onward march in their chariot. The source of their energy lies in their weapons which they carry on their shoulders. Like a bridegroom, brightly ornamented, the Maruts proceed on their chariots. They

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14 *ṚV* : I. 23. 9. ; *hatá vṛtráṁ sudānava índreṇa sáhasā yujā́ |*

15 This indicates intensity of fighting.

16 The text goes as follows :

vā́śīmanta ṛṣṭimánta manīṣiṇaḥ
sudhánvāna iṣumanto niṣaṅgiṇaḥ |
svá́śvāḥ stha surátʰāḥ pṛśnimātaraḥ
svāyudʰā́ maruto yātʰanā śúbʰam ||

are all of equal age and form. Their young father Rudra and resourceful mother Pṛśni have made their days all blissful.[17]

Though the Maruts have been endowed with anthropomorphic features yet one can perceive that at the base of all such descriptions lies the reality of nature in the form of storm, rains and wind. Geldner observes with reference to this, "Trotz aller anthropomorphischen Umbildung schwebt doch gerade bei den Marut das natürliche Phänomen der urplötzlich aus der hervorbrechenden Gewittersturms den Dichter immerwieder vor".[18] 'Inspite of all anthropomorphic modifications the Maruts are, however, always present in the poet's mind as natural phenomenon representing thunder storm that suddenly breaks through cloud.'[19]

The bright Maruts

The Ṛgvedic Maruts are all through described as dazzling with brightness. "They are as bright as sunshine."[20] "The greatness of the Martus who are as bright as the sun, is worthy of eulogy."[21] "They who are wonderful and sun-coloured are marching upwards."[22] The following epithets speak of their bright appearance, *tveṣadyumnaḥ* (I. 37. 4), *tveṣaḥ* (I. 38. 7; 15), *bhrājadṛṣṭayaḥ* (I. 64. 11; V. 55. 1; X. 78. 7), *citrabhānavaḥ* (I. 85. 11), *rukmavakṣasaḥ* (II. 34. 2; 8; V. 55. 1; 57. 5; VIII. 20. 22; X. 78. 2), *hiraṇyaśiprāḥ* (II. 34. 3) and *sūryatvacaḥ* (VII. 59. 11).

The howling Maruts

The howling nature of the Maruts indicates primarily their identity as storm-gods and secondarily as war-gods. The god Agni who makes sound is comparable to the Maruts only.[23] The mountains, though great and old, and the heavenly regions tremble at the sound made by the Maruts (V. 60. 3). The wonderful and bright Maruts shake the heavens during their onward march which is always accompanied by sound.[24]

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17 The following Ṛgvedic verses depict the anthropomorphic features of the Maruts: I. 37. 3; 64. 4; 85. 1; 3; 88. 2; 3; 5; 166. 10; 168. 3; II. 34. 3; 13; V. 53. 4; 54. 11; 55. 1; 56. 1; 57. 6; 58. 2; VII. 56. 13; 57. 3; VIII. 7. 25; 32; 20. 11.

18 Geldner, K. F.: (1951) *Der Rig Veda*, Harvard Oriental Series, vol. 33, p. 47n.

19 Tr. by author.

20 *ṚV* V. 55. 3c: *virokíṇaḥ sū́ryasyeva raśmáyaḥ*

21 *Ibid.* V. 55. 4ab: *ābhūṣényaṁ vo maruto mahitvanáṁ*
didṛkṣéṇyaṁ sūryasyeva cakṣaṇam /

22 *Ibid.* VIII. 7. 7ab: *údu tyé aruṇápsavas citrā́ yā́mebhir īrate /*
(tr. by author)

23 See *ṚV* I. 127. 6.

24 cf. *ṚV* VIII. 7. 3; 7; 17.

The Maruts' anger

The Vedic Indians were scared of the Maruts' wrath. Often they were besought by their devotees to shake off their anger against them. They are approached with obeisance and prayer so that they may shake off their anger, release the horses from the chariot, come to the sacrifice and accept the oblations offered to them (I. 171. 1). They are described as terrific (*bhīmasaṁdṛśaḥ* –V. 56. 2). " As to err is human so may the Maruts withdraw their weapons raised against their devotees, for, they long for their favour and not for their enmity " (VII. 57. 4).[25] Sometimes they are approached for their favour through other gods. I. 94 is an Agni-hymn. In its twelfth verse Mitra and Varuṇa are prayed to by the Maruts' worshippers, so that the great anger of the Maruts against them be pacified and they may be highly pleased with them.

The fearful Maruts

All regions, the whole universe and the well-built houses (*harmyāṇi*) on earth shake in great fear as the Maruts march on. They are earnestly implored to throw far away their weapons and be auspicious to their devotees (I. 172. 2). The helpless sage Vaśiṣṭha tries to convince his own self by saying that the Maruts, inspite of their destructive activities, would not inflict any harm upon him and his people (VII. 56. 9). Sacrifices are offered to Maruts whose advent can be known from a long distance. As they march they cause tremors in the earth which at that time resembles nothing but a frail boat full to its brim (with passengers).[26] Every creature is afraid of the high-minded Maruts who are born of brightness and are very strong and dreadful (VII. 58. 2). The fearful Maruts are nothing but storms in origin. The storm brings forth life through devastation. The Maruts also stand for the well-being of their worshippers. The epithets *dhṛṣṇu* (I. 37. 4), *riśādasaḥ* (I. 39. 4), *udbhidaḥ* (V. 59. 6), *ghoravarpasaḥ* (I. 64. 2), *ugrāḥ* (I. 166. 6) speak of the Maruts' fearful nature.

All the Maruts are equal

It is repeatedly mentioned that the Maruts are all equal. They are of equal age, equal mind and hail from the same place.[27] They are simultane-

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[25] Such descriptions remind us of Rudra, the Maruts' father.

[26] *ṚV* V. 59. 2. *ámād eṣāṁ bhiyáṣā bhūmir ejati*
náur na pūrṇā́ kṣarati vyáthiryati /
duredṛśo ye citáyante émabhir
antár mahé vidáthe yetire náraḥ //

[27] *ṚV* I. 165. 1ab
káyā śubhā́ sávayasaḥ sánīlāḥ /
samānyā́ marútaḥ sáṁ mimikṣuḥ //

ously born and simultaneously they send showers (V. 55. 3). Like the spokes of a wheel, neither of them is inferior while none is superior either (V. 58. 5ab). Neither of them is the eldest nor the youngest, nor is any the middle one.[28] Such a phenomenon of equality in all aspects indicates their identity as storm-gods; the storms are all alike eternally and universally; this also indicates their identity as soldiers, for, the soldiers look alike in their uniforms. The following epithets bear relevance in this connection : *sapsarāsaḥ* (I. 168. 9), *yamā iva* (V. 57. 4), *sanīlāḥ* (VII. 56. 1), *sabandhavaḥ* (VIII. 20. 1), *samanyavaḥ* (II. 34. 3 ; 5 ; 6 ; VIII. 20. 1).[29]

The Maruts as birds

The Maruts are several times compared with birds. They who are of one mind are invited to the *soma*-libation like a flock of swans (II. 34. 5). Like a flock of birds they fall from heaven (V. 59. 7). Like falcons the Maruts come to the oblations offered to them (I. 165. 2 ; VII. 56. 3 ; VIII. 20. 10).[30] Stormy clouds flying at high speed lie at the base of such poetic imagination.[31] The epithet *nīlapṛṣṭhāḥ* (VII. 59. 7) for the Maruts, is very appropriate in this connection.

The Maruts and Soma-libation

In sacrifices the Maruts are offered with the usual *soma*-libation, sometimes independently, sometimes with Agni and other gods and mostly with

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[28] *Ibid.* 59. 6ab : *té ajyeṣṭhā́ ákaniṣṭhāsa udbhído*
madhyamāso máhasā ví vāvṛdhuḥ /
Also see *ṚV.* V. 60. 5.

[29] *samanyavaḥ* appears to be a pet expression with Gṛtsamada in connection with the Maruts. He uses the same thrice in one hymn (II. 34. 3 ; 5 ; 6).

[30] Prof. R. N. Dandekar thinks that because the Maruts were souls of the dead so they have been described as birds : " But perhaps the most suggestive point in this context is that the Maruts are often represented as birds. It may be recalled that according to the primitive mythological thought the spirits of the dead often wander about in the forms of birds." *Vedic Mythological Tracts*, 1979, p. 237 (first published in 1953). We would like to observe here that, not only the Maruts but some other gods also have been compared with birds. *ṚV* III. 8. 9 deserves mention in this connection :
haṁsā́iva śreṇiśó yátānāḥ
śukrā́ vásānāḥ sváravo na ā́guḥ /
unnīyámānāḥ kavíbhiḥ purástād
devā́ devā́nām ápi yanti pā́thaḥ //
In the *ṚV* VIII. 35. 7-9, the Aśvins are compared with the *haridrā* birds, swans, and falcons respectively.

[31] This brings to the mind the *bordoi silā*, the Assamese legendary bird, which at the first norwester goes back to its own abode from its mother's inflicting great devastation on earth. In this connection we also remember *kāl vaiśākhī*, the stormy norwester of Bengal, occurring in the months of April – May.

Indra. " May the Maruts who are of one mind come to the *soma*-offering like a flock of swans " (II. 34. 5). *Soma* is pressed between the two stones for the Maruts " (I. 88. 3).[32]

The Maruts' animals - the Pṛṣatīs, the horses

The well-built chariot of the Maruts is drawn by the Pṛṣatīs. The Maruts were born along with the Pṛṣatīs (I 37. 2).[33] When the Maruts yoke the tawny coloured horses to their chariots, the earth with all its inhabitants is frightened (I. 39. 6).[34] As they, drawn by the Pṛṣatīs, travel, they shower rains.[35] The epithet *pṛṣadaśvāsaḥ* is often used for the Maruts.[36] The question arises, who these Pṛṣatīs are. The *Nighaṇṭu* says, *pṛṣatyo marutām* (I. 15. 6). Sāyaṇa while commenting on the word in I. 37. 2 says *viddyutyuktā mṛgyaḥ*. Geldner translates the word as *scheke*.[37] Sāyaṇa and Geldner hint at their identity as natural phenomenon. Clouds, being tinged with lightning are the animals of the storm-god Maruts, appears to be a very rational imagery.

Horses also in places are stated as the Maruts' animals.[38]

The parents of the Maruts

The Maruts' mother is Pṛśni and they are called *pṛśnimātaraḥ*.[39] Pṛśni bore them in her womb (VI. 66. 3 ; VII. 56. 4). She gave birth to the resplendent Maruts (I. 168. 9). *Go* also is mentioned as their mother (I. 85. 3 ; VIII. 94. 1). Rudra is their father. They are called *rudrāḥ*,[40] *rudriyāḥ*[41]

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32 Also see *ṚV* I. 23. 7; 10; 88. 3; 101. 9; II. 34. 6; VII. 59. 3; 6; VIII. 94. 3; 4; 9-12.
This point will be discussed in details later, while we shall discuss the Maruts' relation with Indra.

33 Also see *ṚV* V. 55. 6; 58. 6.

34 Also see *ṚV* V. 57. 3; 58. 6; 60. 2.

35 See *ṚV* VIII. 7. 28; also see I. 85. 4; 5.

36 See *ṚV* I. 89. 7; 186. 8; II. 34. 4; III. 26. 6; V. 42. 15; VII. 40. 3.

37 *op. cit.* p. 46.

38 See *ṚV* I. 38. 12; 85. 6; 88. 2; V. 54. 10; 55. 1.

39 See *ṚV* I. 23. 10; 38. 4; 85. 2; 89. 7; V. 52. 16; 57. 3; 58. 5; 59. 6; VIII. 7. 3; 17. Sāyaṇa gives different interpretation of Pṛśni in different places : *nānāvarṇa-yuktāyāḥ bhūmeḥ putrāḥ* (I. 23. 10) ; *pṛśnināmakakāmadhenuputrāḥ* (I. 38. 4) ; *pṛśnyāḥ mādhyamikāyāḥ vācaḥ sambandhanim* (II. 34. 10 ; VI. 48. 11 ; VIII. 76. 3). — Regarding the last of these interpretations we would like to observe that the idea of the *mādhyamikā vāc* did not exist at the time when the Ṛgvedic verses had been composed.

40 See *ṚV* I. 39. 4; 7; 64. 3; 85. 2; 166. 2; II. 34. 9; 13; V. 57. 1; 60 2; VIII. 7. 12; 20. 2.

41 See *ṚV* II. 34. 10; VIII. 20. 3.

or *rudriyāsaḥ*,[42] *rudrasya sūnuḥ* or *sunavaḥ*,[43] also *rudrasya maryāḥ*.[44] Rudra gave birth to the Maruts in Pṛśni's womb.[45] Rudra is called *marutvat*[46] (II. 33. 6). To us *Pṛśni* is the cloud laden with water and so quite naturally the Maruts, the storm-gods, are her children. (Cf. Keith, *op. cit.* p. 53 : "Pṛśni is the mother of the Maruts, perhaps the spotted storm-clouds").

On one occasion the Maruts have been stated to be the sons of Bharata (II. 36. 2) and on another as the children of Aditi and heaven (X. 77. 2).

Rodasī, the female associate of the Maruts

Like Sūryā the Aśvins' chariot, Rodasī, the symbol of brightness (*tveṣapratīkā*) and the leader of the sky, ascends the chariot of the Maruts for enjoyment and the Maruts place the young lady in their car (see I. 167. 5; 6). The sacrificer invokes the chariot of the Maruts in which the noble and blissful Rodasī has taken her seat (cf. V. 56. 8-9).

Griswold holds that Rodasī is "perhaps a personification of the lightning, since she is described as 'self-luminous'".[47] We also maintain that

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42 *Ibid.* I. 38. 7; V. 57. 7; 58. 7; VIII. 56. 22.

43 *Ibid.* I. 64. 12; 85. 1; VI. 50. 4; 66. 11; VIII. 20. 17.

44 *Ibid.* I. 64. 2; VII. 56. 1
Sāyana exposes *rudrsya maryāḥ* as *rudrasya mahādevasya putrāḥ* and according to Geldner they are "die jünglinge des Rudra". Geldner is more logical; Mahādeva got his place in the Hindu pantheon much later.

45 II. 34. 2cd : *rudró yád vo maruto rukmavakṣasaḥ*
vṛṣṭājani pṛśnyāḥ śukrá ūdhani //

46 Prof. R. N. Dandekar shows four stages of the mythology of the Maruts. According to him, in the first stage the Maruts "have been independent divinities and were regarded as the hosts of spirits of the dead. (2) The Maruts were later associated with Rudra after the latter god was included in the Vedic pantheon mainly as the god of death." In the third and the fourth stages the Maruts were associated with Indra (*op. cit.* p. 238).
We would like to observe with reference to the first stage of the Marut-mythology, as classified by Prof. Dandekar, that, the Ṛgvedic texts do not give any evidence in favour of the fact that the Maruts were souls of the dead. And, regarding the second stage, it is true that they were very much associated with Rudra but that was only in name; they had no common platform of activities with Rudra as they had with Indra. We think that, in those days life in all aspects was quite helpless and insecure because of the total absence of any security measures to fight against tumultuous destructive nature. People often became victims of cruel nature. This destructive aspect of nature got a form in the imgination of the fearful god Rudra. The Maruts, the storm-gods, were also apparently destructive and so a relation was drawn between them and Rudra. But, as storm-gods they had a positive function to perform : as they travelled in their chariot they made the earth pregnant as a man his wife (cf V. 87. 7).

47 Griswold, H. D. : (1st. Indian print 1971) *The Religion of the Ṛgveda*, Motilal Banarsidass, p. 204, n. 1.

Rodasī represents lightning without which the imagination of storm-gods remains incomplete.[48]

The Maruts and other gods

(i) Indra

The Maruts without Indra is unimaginable. They are *indrajyeṣṭhāḥ* (I. 23. 8), *indravantaḥ* (V. 57. 1). Indra on his part is *marutstotra* (I. 101. 11), *marudvṛdhaḥ* (III. 13. 6), *marutta* (I. 101. 8) and *marutvat*.[49] Of all these epithets of Indra, *marutvat* occurs most frequently. Indrāṇī introduces herself as *marutsakhā*.[50] In the *AV*[51] also Indra is *marutvat*. The Maruts earned the right to the *soma*-libation, they got a place in the *soma*-sacrifice after their association with Indra (I. 87. 5). Whatever favour the Maruts show to their devotees, Indra never contradicts that. All the gods out of Vṛtra's fear left Indra, only the Maruts were by his side;[52] this story is referred to in the *Ait. Br.* also. As a result the Maruts enjoyed the mid-day *soma*-pressing along with Indra; the *Marutvatīya graha* and the *Marutvatīya pragātha* were introduced in favour of the Maruts (see *Ait. Br.* III. 20). Their status in the Vedic pantheon was high. A note of serious discord between the Maruts and Indra is recorded in the Ṛgvedic hymns from I. 165–171. The Maruts were being charged by Indra of leaving him alone at the time of killing Ahi (*ahihatya* I. 165. 6). The Maruts, however, retorted by saying that, all the achievements of Indra's life had been possible only because they were by his side and they have the capacity to perform much more. Indra was not subdued and was about to kill his brothers, the Maruts (I. 170. 2). Through sage Agastya's mediation the dispute was somehow put down. Happily did Indra say, *áchānta me chadáyāthā ca nūnam*, "you have pleased me before and you please me now" (I. 165. 12). Agastya, later discloses the truth to the Maruts that he prepared the offering for them but Indra had

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48 According to Sāyaṇa-*bhāṣya* (I. 167. 5) Rodasī was the wife of the Maruts. Keith also says, "their lovely wife, Rodasī" (*op. cit.* p. 39). The texts, however, never describe her as their wife. Also see *Sanskrit Wörterbuch*, vol. 6, p. 443.

49 *ṚV*. I. 20. 5; 23. 7; 80. 11; 100. 1. I. 101 is an Indra-hymn consisting of eleven verses; in the first seven verses the last line is arefrain which reads : *marútvantaṁ sakhyáya havāmahe*. Also see I. 142. 12; III. 47. 5; VIII. 36. 1.

50 *ṚV* X. 86. 9 : *utāháṁasmi vīriṇíndrapatnī marútsakhā*.

51 *AV* ed. Whitney, W. D., vol. I. : VI. 104· 3; vol. II., XIX. 17. 8.

52 *ṚV* VIII. 96. 7. : *vṛtrásya tvā śvasáthād íṣamāṇā*
víśve devā́ ajahur yé sákhāyaḥ /
marúdbhir indra sakhyáṁ te astv
áthemā́ víśvāḥ pṛtanā́ jayāsi //

Also see *Ait. Br.* III. 20; *maruto hainaṁ nājahuḥ prahara bhagavo vīrayasva iti evainaṁ etaṁ vācaṁ vadanta upatisthanta iti /*

demanded it. Out of fear of Indra he concealed the same elsewhere (I. 171. 4).[53] The same charge against the Maruts by Indra has been referred to in VIII. 7. 31 also.

Based on the hymns to the Maruts the relation between Indra and the Maruts has been discussed so far. We would like to have a glance at the same, as it has been reflected in the relevant Indra-hymns. Indra did not know what point of Vṛtra's body he should strike at, in order to kill him. The Maruts passed to him the important information and Vṛtra was killed (III. 32. 4). Indra's Vṛtra-killing was felicitated by the songs sung by the Maruts. On that occasion Pūṣan and Viṣṇu cooked a hundred buffaloes for the Vṛtra-killer and three lakes of *soma* wers prepared for him (VII. 17. 11). The Maruts being requested sang songs in praise of Indra and then alone was it possible for the Vṛtrahā to kill with his hundred-edged *vajra* his invincible enemy (VIII. 89. 1; 3). The Maruts also sang in praise of Indra when he shattered the ninety-nine castles (of Śambara) (V. 29. 6).

Inspite of the manifold anthropomorphic description of the Maruts, in the Family Books (sp. Book V) they are basically nature gods representing storm, wind and rains. To be precise, they are nature anthropomorphised. How and following what evolutionary process they became Indra's friends and associates is difficult to say. In the onward march of the storm lies a sort of uniformity, a kind of discipline. This characteristic is quite patently present in marching soldiers. These common elements might have been the grounds for the transformation of basically storm-gods into warrior gods as has already been thought by Prof. Dandekar. He observes, " The Maruts are like brothers among whom none is the eldest or the youngest (V. 95. 6 ; 60. 5). They are equal in age (I. 165. 1) and are of one mind (VIII. 20. 1 ; 21) ..... These peculiarities of the Maruts must have presented to the mind of the Vedic poet the picture of the formation of well-disciplined soldiers in their uniforms. When, therefore, the memories of the original character of the Maruts were being gradually dimmed, the Vedic poets naturally thought of associating them newly with their war-god, Indra."[54]

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[53] A conflict between the Indra-cult and the Marut-cult, the upholder of which is sage Agastya, is reflected in this conflict between Indra and the Maruts.

[54] *op. cit.* p. 193.
Prof. Dandekar has shown four stages of the mythology of the Maruts. Here we are concerned with the third and the fourth stages. He thinks, because of their disciplined formation the Maruts were associated with Indra. And, in the last stage, when Indra came to be looked upon as a rain-god, the Maruts became storm-gods (*op. cit.* p. 230).

(Continued on the next page.)

The Maruts and Agni, Viṣṇu, Varuṇa, Vāyu, Nirṛti etc.

But for Indra the Maruts' relation with other gods is rather formal. I. 19 is jointly dedicated to Agni and the Maruts. Throughout the whole hymn the refrain is : *marúdbhir agna ā́ gahi.* V. 60. 8 invokes Agni and the Maruts together to the *soma*-libation (also see I. 31. 1 ; VIII. 7. 32). Viṣṇu and the Maruts, his associates, are mentioned together in V. 87. 1. Both Varuṇa and the Maruts are paid homage together in VIII. 41. 1 (a Varuṇa-hymn). Vāyu generated the Maruts from the udders of heaven (I. 134. 4). The singer prays to the Maruts, ' let not Nirṛti kill them ' (I. 38. 6). VII. 58. 1 states that the Maruts pervade the heavenly regions from regions of Nirṛti.[55] Does it hint at their identity as mortals i. e. from mortality they raised themselves to immortality ? Apart from these deities the Maruts are also invoked along with Indra-Vāyū, Bṛhaspati, Mitrāgni, Pūṣan, Bhaga, Ādityas, Ṛta, Brahmaṇaspati, Aśvins and Uṣas.[56] The Maruts had evidently a distinct place along with other divinities in the Vedic pantheon.

The protégés of the Maruts

The *ṚV* refers to a number of the Maruts' protégés. Trita had been fighting with his enemies ; the invincible Maruts stood by his side and consequently Trita's enemies were defeated.[57] The thirsty Gotama besought the Maruts for water. Softened by the sage's prayer they shifted near him a well from another place (I. 85. 10; 11). The Maruts also contributed immensely towards the achievement of the status of a sage on the part Śyāvaśva (V. 61). Called by the sage Uśanas as the well-armed Maruts, brightly dressed with golden head-dresses etc.. proceeded towards him, even heaven cried out

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(Continued from p. 621.)

Our findings tell us that the Maruts were earlier storm-gods and later evolved into warrior gods, Indra's associates. In the Family Hymns the Maruts were basically storm-gods but anthrpomorphised. Moreover, their relationship with Indra is depicted more in the Indra hymns, belonging to the first *mandala*, than in the hymns dedicated to the Maruts. The history of the Aryans tells us that Indra was originally a warrior god. When the Aryans, after fighting many battles with the non-Aryans, settled in India then they became an agricultural people and started depending on rains for a good harvest. At that time their necessity was more for a rain-god than for a warrior god. So, quite naturally, the most important warrior god Indra evolved into rain-god.

55 Nirṛti, in the whole of the *ṚV*, has been mentioned in connection with the Maruts twice (I. 38. 6 ; VII. 58. 1) only. Basing on these two instances we find it difficult to draw the conclusion that the Maruts were originally associated with Nirṛti as has been mentioned by Prof. Dandekar (*op. cit.* p. 236).

56 See *ṚV* I. 14. 3 (Indra-Vāyū, Bṛhaspati, Mitrāgnī, Pūṣan, Bhaga, Ādityas) ; 15. 2 (Ṛtu) ; 40. 1 (Brahmaṇaspati) ; 44. 14 (Varuṇa, Aśvins and Uṣas).

57 See *ṚV* II. 34. 10 ; VIII. 7. 24.

in fear (VIII. 7. 25; 26). They also gave protection to Turvasa, Yadu and Kaṇva (VIII. 7. 18). They gave wealth consisting of horses to Bharata (V. 54. 19). Now the question arises, who was Bharata – a fore-father of Śyāvāśva he being the seer of the hymn ? The Maruts have been mentioned once (II. 36. 2) as Bharata's children also.[58]

Maruts – the maryas

The Maruts are often described as *maryāḥ*. They are *rudrasya maryāḥ* (I. 64. 2; VII. 56. 1) – the sons of Rudra ; *divo maryāḥ* (V. 59. 6) – the children of heaven. Sāyaṇa interprets *maryāḥ* as *mārakā manuṣyarūpā vā* (see *bhāṣya* of X. 77. 2). Geldner translates *maryāḥ* as " yüngen."[59] The nature of the Maruts as storm-gods, as soldiers, is strong and vigorous and so quite naturally *maryāḥ* became a very appropriate epithet for them.[60]

According to Stig Wikander, **mario* = Skt. *marya* = Männerbund i. e. a band of young men. He is of the opinion that, a nong the different ethnic groups of the Aryans there was the custom of initiating groups of young men with observance of special rites. After this initiation which resembles death (cf. Skt. *dvija*) they were considered as reborn. The Maruts are the divine counterparts of such earthly *Männerbund.*[61] To us Wikander's opinion appears too far-fetched.[62] Louis Renou also holds that the Maruts are a band of " young men " (*marya*).[63]

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[58] O. H. de. Wijesekara " Ṛgvedic Bharata ; A survival from Aryan Pre-history ", *University of Ceylon Review*, vol. VII. 3. 1949, p. 160), observes in this regard, " An analysis of Rudra's character in the *ṚV* shows he is only the primitive hunter deified (Cp. Pali *ludda-ka* for hunter) ..... The Maruts are also such hunters (*mar-ut*, originally killer)." He further thinks that the warriors are an evolution of primitive hunters. He also thinks, that the Bharatas were fighters from *bhṛ* to carry off, hence to rob, plunder, raid ; *bhara* = battle. So the Maruts who were originally hunters later became warriors, the assoiates of Indra.
According to Wijesekara, the Maruts evolved from the Bharatas which, of course, tallies with *ṚV* II. 36, 2. Since Aryan pre-history is still hypothetical, Wijesekara's opinion cannot be finally accepted. Moreover, the linguistic interpretation of the words *rudra* and *marut*, given by him, yet remains to be proved.

[59] *op. cit.* p. 84.

[60] The Ṛgvedic poets had the tendency to use a particular epithet in connection with a particular deity. For example, *dasra* means ' beautiful ', ' charming ' in general, but the poets of the *ṚV* are fascinated with this epithet especially for the Aśvins (Cf. I. 3. 3 ; 46. 2 ; 117. 21 ; III. 58. 3 ; VII. 68. 1 – and there are many more instances).

[61] Wikander, Stig. : (1938) *Der arische Männerbund*, Lund, Cf. pp. 75 -83.

[62] Cf. also Mayrhofer (*op. cit.* p. 590) " *mar* in *maryah*, da die, göttliche Entsprechung zu den menschlichen *maryas* sind, Wikander 83, - ganz unglaubhapt, Juret, RHA 6 6 (1940) 18."

[63] Renou, Louis : (1947) *Vedic India.* tr. Spratt Philip, Calcutta. 1957, p. 63.

The Maruts : gaṇa, śardhas, vrāta, viśaḥ

The Maruts form *gaṇa, śardhas, vrāta* i. e. they form a group by themselves (cf. *marutāṁ gaṇaḥ* V. 46. 5, *marutāṁ gaṇam* VI. 16. 24). The following verse is very relevant in this connection :

vrātaṁvrātaṁ gaṇáṁgaṇaṁ suśastíbhir
agnér bhāmaṁ marútām ójа īmahe / (III. 26. 6ab)

Here *vrāta, gaṇa* or *śardhas* means a group in general and is quite different from the group of Rudras whose number is fixed at eleven, or the group of Vasus who are eight in all, or that of the Ādityas who are always twelve. V. 52. 17, of course, mentions them as seven by seven : *saptá me saptá śākinaḥ*, then according to VIII. 96. 8 they are sixty-three : *triḥ ṣaṣtis tvā maruto vāvṛdhānáḥ*. But, they are mentioned forty-nine or sixty-three in the *ṚV* once and for all.

In the *TS* (II. 2. 5) their number is fixed at forty-nine through a story which narrates that Indra, jealous of Vāyu who was in the state of a foetus in Aditi's womb, chopped the foetus into seven parts, and then each of these into seven again, thus making the total number forty-nine. In later Vedic literature seven are the different names of wind.[64]

In the *ṚV* the idea of the Maruts as group deities consisting of fixed number does not exist. They are many Maruts (*marutaḥ*) i. e. plural of the stem *marut*.

They are mentioned twice (VIII. 12.29; 13.28) as Indra's people (*viśaḥ*). The idea that the Maruts are Indra's people developed more in the *TS* and in the *Brāhmaṇas*. In the *ṚV* the Maruts, apart from being Indra's people, have a separate independent identity which they almost lost in later Vedic literature.

The Maruts – euhemeristic

Once the Maruts are addressed by the sage Kaṇva, " oh you the children of Pṛśni ! had you been mortal and had I been immortal ! "[65] Geldner interprets, " Had I been in your position and you in mine, I would then have

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[64] The *Ait. Ār.* IV. 24. names the seven winds as follows : *dhuniśca dhvanvaśca dhvanaśca dhvanayaśca niliptaśca viliptaśca vikṣipa iti* / also see IV. 25.

[65] *ṚV* I. 38. 4. :
yád yūyáṁ pṛśnimātaraḥ mártāsaḥ syātana /
stotā́ vo 'mṛtaḥ syāt //

made your worshippers immortal."[66] In I. 85 the poet mentions twice (2; 7) that the Maruts have made an abode in the heavenly region from the world of Nirṛti (i. e. the goddess of death). These instances speak of their euhemeristic origin. Compared to the massive representation of them in the *ṚV* as nature gods these few references are, however, meagre.

It has been observed by us that, the more the Maruts get closer to Indra the more they behave like human beings. In a few hymns of the first (I. 165–71) and eighth (7, 12) *maṇḍalas* they are represented in the main as Indra's associates, friends and also as rivals. They are depicted quite euhemeristically in those hymns.

Such euhemeristic representation of the Maruts led some scholars to conclude that the Maruts were originally human beings. According to Satavalekar the Maruts were human heroes, great patrons who having decorated themselves with ornaments served their mother-land and so quite naturally *go,* the mother earth, was their mother. According to him the word *marut* has been formed from *mar* " to die " — *ye maraṇaparyantam utthāya yudhyante.*[67] Nigam Sharma maintains that, as the Ṛubhus, originally human beings, by their dexterity raised themselves to the status of divinity, so also did the Maruts. They are successful young soldiers of Indra.[68] Uma Gupta refers to the *ṚV* I. 72. 2 and says, " the Maruts — ' mortal bands ' with their spouses worshipped Agni for three autumns and thus though ' mortal bands ' won the holy names for worship and dignified their bodies. "[69]

Regarding the opinions of these scholars we would like to comment that, they have given a partial opinion on the identity of the Maruts and have totally neglected the primary aspect of their character which lies in storms, rains and winds, and which has been represented in the majority of hymns to the Maruts. That the Maruts were originally not human beings is also evident from the fact that in the early Vedic age no conflict arose regarding the Maruts' right to the *soma*–libation; they had been very naturally and with dignity enjoying this right whereas the Ṛbhus had to struggle hard in achieving this right. Much contradiction arose regarding the Aśvins' right to the *soma*–libation also.[70]

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66 *op. cit.* p. 48, n. 4 (tr. by author). Geldner's interpretation is long-drawn but bears relevance.

67 Satavalekar, S. : (1965) " vedamantreṣu vīrapuruṣāṇāṁ varṇanam ", *Gurukul Patrikā*, 18 (1–2), pp. 35-36.

68 Sharma, Nigam : (1967) " Marudgaṇaḥ " *Gurukul Patrikā*, 20 (1–2), pp. 39-43.

69 Gupta, Uma : (1987) *Materialism in the Vedas*, New Delhi, p. 55.

70 See the author's articles : (1990) " The Ṛbhus ", *ABORI* LXX, pp. 139-54; (1989) " Divine Doctors Aśvins and the Soma-drink ", *JAS* Bengal, vol. 31, pp. 30–38.

The Maruts are also medicine-men. They are capable of curing the malady of the diseased.[71]

Geography and history in the Marut-hymns

The Maruts made unclean the waters of the river Paruṣṇī (V. 52. 9). The sage Śyāvāśva purifies his treasure of cows etc. in the water of the river Yamunā (V. 52. 17). The Maruts went to the countries Śaryānavat and Ṛjīka (VIII. 7. 29).

The literary beauty of the Marut-hymns

As while paying obeisance to the goddess Uṣas the Ṛgvedic singers become highly imaginative and poetic so also they become vibrant with their poetic imagination while paying homage to the Maruts. In places the adjectives are placed one after the other as if in a chain.[72] A few of them describe them as storm-gods, some as soldiers[73] while still others give a mixed description of these divinities.[74] Again in some verses a flavour of fine similes is inferred. The Maruts, the destroyers, are compared with wild elephants.[75] The Maruts, the storm-gods, are like swans with dark-coloured backs[76] – the moving dark clouds represent the black-backed swans. VII. 56.16 reminds us of the figure of speech Mālopamā in which the Maruts are compared with a

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[71] Cf. *ṚV* VIII. 20. 26cd :
kṣamā́ rápo maruta ā́turasya na íṣkarta vihrutaṁ púnaḥ |

[72] One such verse is quoted below :
hiraṇyáyebhiḥ pavíbhiḥ payovṛ́dhā
úñjighnanta āpathyo3́ ná párvtān |
makhā́ ayā́saḥ svasṛ́to dhruvacyúto
dudhrakṛ́to marúto bhrā́jadṛṣṭayaḥ ||
Also see I. 87. 1.

[73] *ṚV* V. 57. 2 :
vā́śīmanta ṛṣṭimánto manī́ṣiṇaḥ
sudhánvāna íṣumanto niṣaṅgíṇaḥ |
sváśvāḥ stha suráthāḥ pṛśnimātaraḥ
svāyudhā́ maruto yāthana śúbham ||
Also see VII. 56. 11.

[74] *ṚV*, V. 58. 2 :
tveṣáṁ gaṇáṁ tavásaṁ khā́dihastaṁ
dhunivrataṁ māyinaṁ dātivāram |
mayobhúvo ye ámitā mahitvā́
vándasva vípra tuvirā́dhaso nṝ́n ||

[75] *ṚV* I. 64. 7c : *mṛgā́ iva hastínaḥ khādatha vanā́*

[76] *ṚV* VII. 59. 7ab : *svaśvás cid hí tanavaḥ śúmbhānā*
ā́ haṁsā́so nī́laprṣṭhā apaptan |

fleet of horses, a group of men enjoying a festival, children playing in palaces and with playful calves.[77]

The Maruts in the Atharvaveda

Some changes are observed in the character of the Maruts in the *AV*. The storm-gods of the *ṚV* are transformed into rain-gods. IV. 15 of the *AV* has been entitled by Satavalekar as *vṛṣṭiḥ*; in the seventh, eighth and ninth verses of this hymn the refrain is *bhavadbhiḥ pracyutā meghā varṣantu pṛthivīm anu,*[78] "let the clouds, started forward by the Maruts, rain along earth."[79] IV. 27. 4 says, how the Maruts carry water upto heaven from oceans and then again shower them on earth; they are the masters of water.[80] As in the *ṚV* here also the Maruts are as bright as the sun,[81] *indrajyeṣṭhāḥ* (III. 19. 6, p. 44), the associates of Indra and warrior gods (III. 19. 6; V. 21. 11). Some magical elements are added in their character : "Let Indra confound the army; let the Maruts slay with force; let it go back conquered" (III. I. 6).[82] The singer asks the Maruts to pierce the enemy with baffling darkness (III. 2. 6).

Pṛśni is their mother (V. 21. 11), but their father is Paśupati (V. 24. 12). They are also the children of height (I. 26. 3 : *pravato napāt*).

The Maruts in the Taittirīya Saṁhitā, Brāhmaṇas and in the Sūtras

Although the principal traits of the Maruts' character are apparently present in the *TS* and in the Brāhmaṇas, yet there is no denying the fact that, compared to the Ṛgvedic Maruts, the Maruts of the later Vedic literature have lost their prominence and grandeur. They no more attract us by their adventurous, bright and fearful onward march. They have become stereo-

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77 *átyāso ná yé maruto svāñco*
yakṣadṛśo ná śubhāyanta māryāḥ /
te harmyeṣṭhāḥ śiśavo ná śubhrī
vatsāso ná prakrīḷinaḥ payodhāḥ //

78 The *AV* edited by Satavalekar, Sripad Damodar, Satara, has been followed for references in this article.

79 Tr. by Whitney, W. D. : *Atharva Veda Samhita*, vol. I, (reprint) Motilal Banarsidass, 1961, pp. 173–74.

80 *āpaḥ samudrād divam udvahanti*
divaḥ pṛthivīm abhi ye sṛjanti /
ye adbhir īśānā marutaś caranti
te no muñcantu aṁhasaḥ //
"Waters from ocean to the sky carry up, they who pour (them) from the sky upon the earth – the Maruts who go about lording it with the waters; let them free us from distress." tr. *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 196.

81 See *AV* I. 26. 3, p. 11.
yūyaṁ na parvato naptātaḥ marutaḥ sūryatvacasaḥ

82 tr. *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 85.

typed and limitations are inflicted on their rights and privileges. In these later Vedic literature they have been permanently placed in the position of *deva-viśaḥ* – divine subjects.

It has been already observed that in the *AV* the Maruts have been transformed from storm-gods to rain-gods and the same trend has been maintained in the *TS* also. The *TS* represents a society which was sacrifice-oriented. So, the Maruts have been referred to in connection with sacrifices only.

The *Kārīrīṣṭi* is performed for rains. The Maruts have a major part in rain-bringing. They are invoked in many verses in this sacrifice (see *TS* II. 4. 7–10). As has been already referred to they are represented as seven winds in the *Ait. Br.* Our conjeture is. as they are wind-gods and rain-gods, so they are *krīḍins* (*TS* I. 8. 4) i. e. playful in their manner.

Some war-like elements in their character can also be traced in the *TS.* In the *apratiratha* hymn (IV. 6. 4) they are desired to lead the divine soldiers with Indra as their leader. Their martial nature can be inferred from the expressions like *marutāṁ prasave jeṣyāmi, marutām ojase svāhā* (*TS* I. 8. 14; 15).

The Maruts are Indra's friends.[83] They are also *indrajyeṣṭhāḥ* 'with Indra as their head' (*TS* V. 5. 9). Indra killed Vṛtra but he was not sure whether he had really killed his enemy. The Maruts revealed the truth to Indra on condition that the first offering is to be given to them[84]. Besides these, the Maruts are invited along with Indra in the *Kāmyeṣṭi* sacrifice. In the *Ṣoḍaśin* sacrifice they are the participants in the mid-day sacrifice. Besides being enjoyers of *soma, caru, āmikṣā* (clotted[85] curd), they are also given the seventh limb of the horse in the horse-sacrifice.[86] The Maruts were about to devastate the sacrifice; Prajāpati, somehow, pacified them by offering animal-fat to them (*Tait. Br.* I. 4. 4). According to the Ṛgvedic texts, Pṛśni was the Maruts' mother and now she becomes the animal to be offered to them.[87]

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83 *Tait. Br.* I. 6. 5 : *indro marudbhiḥ sakhibhiḥ saha.*

84 *TS* I. 6. 7 : *asmabhyam eva prathamaṁ haviḥ nirupyatyām* /
This story is also referred to in the *Ait. Br.* III. 9.

85 In the *Vaiśvānara*-rite they are offered with *saptakapāla puroḍāśa* and in the *Varuṇapraghāsa*– rite *āmīkṣā* is offered to them (*TS* I. 8. 2). In the *Śākamedha*-rite *caru* is offered in the mid-day sacrifice to the Sāntapana Maruts and the same is offered to the Gṛhamedhin Maruts in the evening (*TS* I. 8. 4).

86 *TS* V. 7. 21 : *marutāṁ saptamī*

87 *TS.* V. 6. 12 : *pṛśnis tiraścīn pṛśnir ūrdhva pṛśnis te marutaḥ* /

That the Maruts are seven multiplied by seven i. e. forty-nine in number, has been mentioned only once in the *ṚV* (V. 52. 17). But the *TS* associates them with this number invariably : "The Maruts with seven syllables won the seven-footed *śakvarī*[88] (I. 7. 11 ; I. 8. 2) ; the *puroḍāśa* baked in seven potsherds is to be offered to them, they are seven in troops.[89]

The most significant development in the mythology of the Maruts which in the *TS* and the Brāhmaṇas is observed is that, they are now placed in the position of the subjects of the gods, i. e. *devaviśaḥ*. "The Maruts are the subject class among the gods ; verily by subjects among the gods he wins for him the subjects among men".[90] (*TS* II. 2. 25). "Vaiśvānara is kingly power, the Maruts the people ; having offered to Vaiśvānara, he offers those to the Maruts ; verily he attaches the people to the kingly power ... ... He utters aloud (in the direction of the *Agnīdh*) for Vaiśvānara, he offers the offerings of the Maruts muttering ; therefore, the kingly power speaks above the people"[91] (*TS* V. 4. 7). From the above statements it becomes evident that the kingly power always had the threat[92] from the subjects, and there was constant effort on the part of the royalty to subjugate people. Such elements were not present in the Ṛgvedic texts. In the later Saṁhitās and early Brāhmaṇa period monarchy had been gradually taking shape[93] which the Ṛgvedic Aryans, who had been so busy in fighting against the non-Aryans and settling down in the new land, were not previously familiar with.

The Maruts who were resplendent "martial storm-gods",[94] Indra's associates and friends in the *ṚV*, who were strong enough to challenge even Indra's strength, now lose their grandeur, their privileges which they had been enjoying as gods, and are placed in the position of the subjects of the gods. It is true that they had been enjoying *soma*-libation along with Indra, the reason, we presume, is, as they were Indra's people so they were royal people, i. e. belonging to the royal entourage, escorting the king to the sacrifice ; so they must be shown due honour along with their master. They are now associated with sins also. The *ŚB* (II. 5. 2. 7) states that the sacrificer's wife who has committed the sin of having intercourse with one who is not her

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88 Tr. by Keith, A. B. : *Veda of the Black Yajurveda*, Harvard Oriental Series 18, p. 152.

89 *TS* II. 2. 11 : *saptakapālo maruto bhavanti saptagaṇā vai marutaḥ.*

90 Tr. *op. cit.*, p. 110. 91 *Ibid.* vol. 19, p. 435.

92 Cf. *Tait. Br.* : II. 7. 11. 30 : ed. Mahadeva Shastri, (reprint) 1987, Motilal Banarsidass, p. 424(?). *maruto vai devānāṁ bhūyiṣṭhāḥ* – Such statements indicate the strength of the subjects - here the Maruts.

93 Cf. *Ait. Br.* eighth *pañcikā*, (37–39) describing the consecration of the king.

94 Cf. the *Encyclopaedia of Religions* (1987), Macmillan Publishing Company, vol. 7, p. 214.

husband, invokes the Maruts in the *Varuṇapraghāsa*-rite of the *Cāturmāsya* sacrifice in order to be absolved of the sin. The Maruts are connected with the *Aśvattha* tree – " *Aśvattha* is the might of the Maruts " (*TS* II. 3. 1). A review of the Śrautasūtras tells us that the Maruts had been enjoying the same status in the sacrifices as they had been enjoying in the Saṁhitā– and the Brāhmaṇa– period. But in the Gṛhyasūtras, to be more specific in the *Pāraskara gṛhyasūtra*, they have fallen very low. While dealing with the *Prauṣṭhapada*-sacrifice this Gṛhyasūtra states : " Having cooked milk-rice for Indra and cakes, and having put cakes round (the fire), he sacrifices the two *ājya* portions and *ājya* oblations to Indra, to Indrāṇī, to Aja Ekapād, to Ahi Budhnya and to the Proṣṭhapadas. After he has eaten (his portion of the sacrificial food), he offers *bali* to the Maruts. For the Śruti says, ' the Maruts eat what is not sacrificed '. (This *bali* he offers) in the *Aśvattha* leaves, because it is said, ' The Maruts stood in the *Aśvattha* tree.' "[95] Here we wonder at the poor oblations offered to Indra. Gone is his so delicious pools of *soma*–drink ! If Indra is offered with the milk-rice then keeping in conformity with the general trend in the fall of the standard of offering to the gods, it is quite justified that such a *bali* is offered to the Maruts, the Maruts who are the *ahutādas*.[96] The rites prescribed in the *Gṛhyasūtras* are performed by the house-holder without any priestly help in a very informal manner, bereft of the pomp of the *śrauta*–sacrifices, so it is quite natural that the oblations offered to the deities were also of quite an ordinary standard, without the grandeur of a *śrauta*–sacrifice.

Opinions of scholars on the identity of the Maruts

So far, scholars have come up with eight different opinions[97] on the identity of the Maruts. A majority of them, right from Yāska, hold that

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95 *Pāraskara Gṛhyasūtra* II. 15. 2-4 ; tr. Oldenberg, H. ; *SBE* 29, p. 331

96 *Pāraskara Gṛhyasūtra* has quoted *ahutādo vai marutaḥ* from *ŚB* IV. 3.2. 16 in support of the rule that the Maruts should be offered *bali*–offering. In the technical sense the term *ahuta* is applied to the *bali*–offering. *Śāṅkhāyana Gṛhyasūtra* (ed. Sehgal, S. R. : Delhi, 1960. I. 107) defines *ahuta* : *ahuto balikarmaṇā*. Prof. R. N. Dandekar identifies the Maruts originally with the souls of the dead. Their association with *Aśvattha* tree, their being *ahutādas* are some of the many grounds for such inference (see *op. cit.* pp. 236–38). Chronologically the Sūtras belong to the last phase of the Vedic period. Had the Maruts been originally the souls of the dead, then the references to the *Aśvattha* etc. were expected in the *ṚV* also, the *ṚV* being the earliest phase of the Vedic literature.

97 The different opinions of scholars on the identity of the Maruts may be roughly summed up as follows ;

I. Storm-gods : Heinrich Zimmer, Adolf Kaegi, E. W. Hopkins, H. Oldenberg, K. F. Geldner, A. A. Macdonell, A. B. Keith, M. Winternitz, J. Gonda.

(Continued on the next page.)

they were basically nature gods representing storm, rains etc. Heinrich Zimmer was, probably, the first western scholar to support the view that the Maruts were storm-gods. He gives a description of the terrible Indian monsoon, translates *RV* V. 83 and in that connection adds " Zweifelsohne hat man manche andere prächtige Schilderung des Gewitters des Zuges der Maruts auf den Südwest Monsun zu beziehen."[98] According to Adolf Kaegi, " Rudra's sons and companions are richly adorned, well-armed Maruts, the gods of thunder-storm, the heavenly singers."[99] A. Barth maintains, " Indra's faithful companions, the Maruts, probably the bright ones, gods of storm, of the lightning...".[100] Hopkins says about these deities, " They are red storm-gods, following Rudra, their father, and accompanying the storm-bringer Indra... . Their mother is the variegated cow Pṛśni, the mother cloud. Their name means shining, gleaming ones... an unadulterated type of nature god. "[101] Edmund Hardy holds discussion on the Maruts in the chapter entitled " Regen und Wind " which signifies his opinion on the the Maruts' identity.[102] H. Oldenberg accepts the Maruts primarily as nature gods connected with storm and wind " Die Beziehung der Maruts auf Sturm und Gewitter, insonderheit auf den Monsun, der alljährlich die grossen Regen bringt drängt sich auf. "[103] According to A. A. Macdonell, " They (the

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(Continued from p. 630.)

II. A band of heavenly young men : Stig Wikander.
III. A Band of Young Men : Louis Renou.
IV. Patriots : S. D. Satavalekar.
V. Hunters : O. H. de A. Wijesekara.
VI. Those who later earned divinity through noble deeds : Nigam Sharma, Uma Gupta. The last four opinions (III, IV, V, VI) are based on the euhemeristic origin of the Maruts.
VII. Host of genii dwelling in heaven : L. D. Barnett.
VIII. Souls of the dead in the Pre-Ṛgvedic age : A. Kuhn, Benfey, von Schroeder, Meyer, A. Hillebrandt, R. N. Dandekar, Sukumari Bhattacharji.

98 Zimmer, Heinrich : (1879) *Altindisches Leben*, Berlin, p. 43.

99 Kaegi, Adolf : (1880) *The Ṛgveda*, Tr. Arrowsmith, p. 39.

100 Barth, A. : (1881) *Religions of India*, Tr. Wood, J., London.

101 *op. cit.* p. 97.

102 Hardy Edmund : (1893) *Vedisch-Brahmanische Periode der Religion des alten Indien*, Munster, pp. 83-85.

103 Oldenberg, H. : (1894) *Die Religion des Veda*, Stuttgart und Berlin (2nd. ed.) 1917. pp. 225–26.

Oldenberg does not totally rule out the possibility of the Maruts being the souls of the dead and in that connection he refers to the *Mysterium und Mimus* 121ff. by L. Von Schroeder, Hillebrandt's *Vedische Mythologie*, vol. III, 238ff, but at the same time this remains a puzzle to him and he considers that the Ṛgvedic texts do not give any clear picture on the identity of the Maruts as the souls of the dead. " Irgend klare Spüren die auf Seelenschar der Maruts deuten, liegen meiner Erchatens allerdings nicht vor " (*op. cit.* p. 226).

Maruts) are storm-gods."[104] To A. B. Keith also the Maruts are, "the deities of wind in their aspect as bearing the storm clouds."[105] We have already referred to the view of K. F. Geldner, an upholder of the view that the Maruts were storm-gods. M. Winternitz also believed that the Maruts were storm-gods.[106] To Jan Gonda, the Maruts were, in the main, storm-gods and were also at the same time benevolent earthly bards and Indra's associates : "Vielleicht sollte man sie für atmosphärishe, besonders gewitterige Sturmmächte halten die nach Analogie irdischer Verhältnisse als Helfer, Barden, Heerenschaar Indras interpretiert wurden."[107] We have already discussed the view regarding the Maruts' identity of Stig Wikander, to whom the Maruts were the heavenly counterpart of an earthly band of young men and also of Louis Renou, to whom the Maruts were, "a band of young men." The euhemeristic view regarding the Maruts of O. H. de A. Wijesekara, S. D. Satavalekar, Nigam Sharma and Uma Gupta has been already discussed.

According to R. C. Hazra,[108] the Maruts were originally followers of an anti-Indra Iranian god Maruttash – a warrior god, originally a nature divinity associated with peasantry and with wind, rain and growth of food-grains. The Maruts which is the Indian name of the individual Iranian divinity Maruttash were defeated by Indra. They submitted themselves before Indra, became his associates and friends and because of their benevolent nature as nature gods enjoyed all the privileges due to a Vedic deity : "So, there is hardly any doubt that it was the Maruttash of Iranians who later became the Maruts of India."[109]

Hazra is also of the opinion that the Maruts were later associated with Rudra – originally a non-Aryan deity, "for giving him a Vedic stamp, and thus making his entrance into Vedic fold easier, they (the Aryans) thought it advisable to associate him with the Maruts as their father and progenitor."[110]

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104 *op. cit.* p. 81.

105 *op. cit.* p. 152.

106 Winternitz, M. : (1907, 1st German ed.) *A History of Indian Literature*, vol. I,[0] (tr.) Mrs. Ketkar, S., Calcutta University, 1962 (3rd ed.), p. 65 ; p. 81.

107 Gonda, Jan : (1960) *Religionen Indiens* I, W. Kohlhammer, (2nd ed.), 1978, p. 61.

108 Hazra, R. C. : (1981) "The historical background of the Maruts' (or Rudras') Association with Indra and Rudra and of the Puranic Story of their origin", *Purāṇam* 23 (2), pp 110–48.

109 *Ibid.* p. 132.

The question arises, how far it is linguistically justified to derive *marut* from *maruttash*, while the majority of the scholars hold that the word has been formed from *mṛ* "to shine", or "to die". Also see Mayrhofer : *op cit* pp. 590-91,

110 *Ibid.* p. 144.

Among the reasons for associating Rudra with the Maruts, as shown by Hazra, one is that, both were outlandish. As pre-Vedic history of the Aryans is still to be explored, so it is very difficult to prove the historicity of such inference. Hazra also thinks that, the group deities, the Rudras i. e. the host of Rudras, were quite different from the Maruts for whom *rudrāḥ* was just an epithet because of their howling nature.[111]

L. D. Barnett compares the Maruts with the Iranian Fravaśis and says : " The Maruts are a host of genii dwelling in heaven and constantly waging battles in the sky against the power of darkness and evil especially revealing themselves in the lightning and thunders of the storms that bring rains to parched land of Northern India and revive the force of nature .... Owing to peculiar climatic conditions of India, this function of ruling the storm and thereby giving rains has overshadowed the aspects of the Maruts in the Vedic India and misled the modern scholars into regarding them as primarily and originally storm-gods."[112] We would like to observe here that, not only to modern scholars, even to Yāska the Maruts were atmospheric gods representing storms and rains. And, it is difficult to infer the Indian counterparts of the Iranian Fravaśis from the textual evidences.

Many a scholar support the view that the Maruts were in origin souls of the dead and later they evolved into Indra's associates and storm-gods. A. Kuhn, Benfey, Von Schroeder, Meyer, Hillebrandt, Dandekar, Sukumari Bhattacharji belong to this group of scholars. Historically their opinion

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111 *Ibid.* p. 145.

Prof. Dandekar, however, thinks just in the opposite direction. According to him, the Maruts were first associated with Rudra, the god of death, and then with Indra, the warrior-god (*op. cit.* p. 238n).

In this connection we would like to refer to Ernst Arbman who also maintains that the Maruts and the Rudras, the group deities, were distinct from each other : " Dass die Maruts als Indras Gefolge an den Kämpfen dieses Gottes gegen die Feinde der Götter und Menschen teilnehmen, entspricht nur ihrem leichten heldenhaften Wesen – wie könnte man sie Rudras finsteren Mordtaten beteiligt denken ? " *Rudra*, Uppsala, 1932, p. 16.

We have already expressed our view in this regard.

112 Barnett, L. D. : (1929) " A Study of the Indo-European Psychology ", *JRAS* Part iv, p. 737.

Barnett refers to *ahi-bhānu* (I. 172. 1) ' radiant as serpents ', *ahi-manyu* (I. 64. 8 ; 9) ' having fury of serpents' and connects the Maruts, because of their association with snakes, with the Italian ' genius ', who was already figured in art as a young man with a snake (*Ibid.* p. 738). We would like to comment here that, it was quite natural for the Vedic poets to compare the terrible storm with the brightness, fury and violence of a snake without having any connection with the Italian ' genius '. A. B. Keith also thinks in the same light (See *op. cit.* p. 39).

might be valid, but the Ṛgvedic texts do not bear any evidence in support of their opinion. Macdonell says in this regard : " A. Kuhn, Benfey held the Maruts to be personification of the souls of the dead and with his view Meyer and Von Schroeder substantially agree. This origin is historically possible but the *ṚV* furnishes no evidence in support of it."[113] A. B. Keith also thinks in the same light : " the only other view of importance is that they are the souls of the dead who go in storm and wind but of this at least *ṚV* has no hint ; nor is the etymology from *mṛ* ' to die ' enough to serve as a base for the explanation, since their appellation may equally come from a root *mṛ* ' to shine ' or ' to crush ', either of which would well accord with their figure. "[114] Jan Gonda who believes that the Maruts were primarily storm-gods, comments in this regard : " Anderen haven mit geringen Erfolg versucht diese Gottheiten als die im Sturm dahinfahrende Seelsnschaar zu deuten wofür die Texte aber so gut wie keinen Anhalt geben. "[115]

Conclusion

The same deity appears in different forms at different times to his worshippers. Sometimes the god is all benign to his devotees, at others he appears in destructive mood. And, this is quite natural. The same nature with advent of spring and rains showers bliss on humanity, and with drought and flood causes massive havoc on it. The Maruts, also in like manner, possess mutually contradictory elements in their character which fact led the scholars of the past and present to see them in different perspectives and draw different conclusions on their identity. The same is the case with many other deities, especially with the Aśvins.

The Ṛgvedic Maruts are basically storm-gods accompanied by rain and wind. As they are storm-gods so they are bright, noisy, full of anger, fearful, equal in form and age ; they are like swans with black backs (*nīlapṛṣṭhāḥ*) ; their mother is Pṛśni – the mottled cloud, and the fearful Rudra is their father ; Rodasī who according to the Vedic texts is lightning, is their female associate ; their chariot is drawn by spotted deer (Pṛṣatīs) which represent clouds tinged with lightning. They are highly anthropomorphic. Being brightly dressed and decorated with resplendent golden ornaments, carrying weapons in their hands they march forward shaking heaven and earth, forests, mountains and endangering fears in the minds of the earthly people. But, this is only their outward manifestation. At the base of all such descriptions lies nature. The Maruts, the storm-gods, are only apparently anthropomorphic ; to us they are nature anthropomorphised.

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[113] *op. cit.* p. 81. [114] *op. cit.* p. 39. [115] *op. cit.* p. 61.

The martial elements in the character of the Maruts are also very prominent. Guarded by shoulder-bands, with whips and all kinds of weapons in their hands they proceed in their chariots drawn by the Pṛṣatīs, against their enemies to win battles. Their weapons never fail them in the battle-field. They are ferocious and their victory in the fore-front of battlefield is always guaranteed. That they howl, manifestly full of anger, fearful and are all the same in appearance – all this is not only because they are storm-gods but also because they are soldiers. One sees in their warlike activities the function of the invading Aryans. So, they are described as *maryas* –, a band of young men, and they move in groups (cf. *śardhas, gaṇa, vrāta,* etc.).

Among all the gods the Maruts' relation with Indra is the most intimate. They are his friends and associates. In connection with Indra they become more euhemeristic. They sing Indra's praise ; they also quarrel with him. In the episode of slaying Vṛtra, they aided Indra more by inspiring him, by singing laudatory songs and giving war counsels than by actually fighting for him. Along with Indra they enjoy the drink of *soma* in the sacrifices.

The wonderful experiences the newly arrived Aryans had when they observed the stormy weather of this new land, India, and the image of the invading hosts left a deep impression in the minds of the Ṛgvedic poets. Such experiences received poetic expressions in the songs to the Maruts who in some hymns represent the stormy weather and in others the actual Aryan warriors. Two more or less similar characters are mingled in one name – the Maruts. It is difficult to say, which of these characters is earlier, as poems belonging to this category are spread all over in the *ṚV*, irrespective of earlier or later books. The majority of the hymns dedicated to the Maruts, however, depict them more as nature gods than as gods of war.

The Maruts, the Ṛgvedic storm-gods, have been transformed into rain-gods in the *AV*, *TS* and in later Vedic literature. They have a major part to play in the *Kārīriṣṭi* which is performed for rain. This tells us that the Aryans, now settled in India, started depending on rain for agriculture. The society, now has become sacrifice-oriented. In the *TS* and the Brāhmaṇas the Maruts are mentioned only when it became necessary to refer to them in connection with the narration of sacrifices.

The most prominent change in the character of the Maruts, as observed in the later Vedic literature, is that, they are now finally confirmed in the status of the *devaviśaḥ* i. e. the subjects of the gods, whereas in the *ṚV* they are very infrequently mentioned in that manner. Thus, a great fall in their

position is noticed. Though they were offered the usual *soma*-libation in the sacrifices, yet it becomes very evident that they have now lost their grandeur, their brightness with which they made their onward march in the Ṛgvedic era. That they were not deprived of the *soma*-libation, we believe, is because of the fact, they were Indra's people, the royal entourage, *indrajyeṣṭhāḥ* 'with Indra as their chief' — the royal people must, by all means, be rendered due honour and hospitality. The constant effort of subjugating the Maruts (cf. *TS* V. 4. 7) who were divine subjects, are nothing but the reflections of the efforts of subduing the subjects by the newly arisen power of 'kings', local overlords of petty principalities. This power was under constant threat from subjects and from the society which was under the rule of monarchy as monarchical rule now has been fully established (cf. the eighth *pañcikā* of the *Ait. Br.*). Till the days of the Śrautasūtras the Maruts, though classified as *devaviśaḥ* i. e. 'the divine subjects', yet were offered due *soma* libation along with other divinities. While the other Gṛhyasūtras are silent about the Maruts, in the *Pāraskara-gṛhyasūtra* they were ear-marked as *ahutāda*, i. e. the eaters of *bali*-offering. *Bali* is a very ordinary type of offering of rice and grain and that also the sacrificer offers after he has eaten his own share i. e. the mere left-overs – definitely signifying a considerable humiliation for the Maruts.[116]

Contrary to the Ṛbhus who, born as human beings, raised themselves to the status of solar deities, the gods of fecunditiy, by dint of their noble deeds, the Maruts, originally storm-gods, warrior gods, Indra's friends and associates, proud receivers of *soma*-libation were demoted to the low status of *bali*-eaters. Later, in Sanskrit literature Marut is used in the singular and is the name of the wind-god. Like the majority of Vedic deities, the Maruts also have hardly any function to perform in a Hindu rite.

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116 We have already discussed in this essay that in the Gṛhya-sūtras the standard of offerings to the gods, in a general way, sank very low.